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Selected Speeches and News Releases

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USDA ALLOWS FIELD TESTS OF GENETICALLY ENGINEERED ORGANISM TO PROTECT RICE

WASHINGTON, June 22—The U.S. Department of Agriculture is issuing a permit to Crop Genetics International of Hanover, Md., to field test rice plants containing a microorganism genetically engineered to protect rice from insect pests.

The test, in Queen Anne's County, Md., will begin immediately, said James W. Glosser, administrator of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. Last month, APHIS issued a permit to CGI to test the same genetically altered microorganism in corn.

"The Environmental Protection Agency and APHIS have jointly reviewed this test and found it to be environmentally safe," said Glosser.

To develop the rice plant, CGI scientists used two bacteria—one occurs naturally in soil and is commonly used as a biological control agent, the other lives within plants. The soil bacterium, *Bacillus thuringiensis*, contains a gene for a protein that becomes toxic when eaten by caterpillars. Scientists added this gene to the second bacterium, *Clavibacter xyli*, subspecies *cynodontis*, which can live within the rice plant and which scientists hope will now be able to protect the crop from insect pests.

Rice is the world's leading grain crop, accounting for one fifth of all grain grown worldwide. In 1988, the United States produced 5.07 million metric tons, or about one-and-a-half percent of the 322.74 million metric tons grown worldwide, according to USDA statistics. Rice pests that could be affected include the rice leafroller, rice stalk borer and fall armyworm.

A copy of the environmental assessment, developed by APHIS to examine possible environmental effects associated with this test, is available from Mary Petrie, Room 847, Federal Building, 6505 Belcrest Road, Hyattsville, Md. 20782; (301) 436-5874.

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SOIL EROSION DOWN AS CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM ACREAGE EXPANDS

WASHINGTON, June 22—The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Conservation Reserve Program will reduce soil erosion by nearly 610 million tons of soil per year on the 30.6 million acres contracted in the program to date, according to Wilson Scaling, chief of USDA's Soil Conservation Service.

“The benefits are widespread, both on and off the farm,” said Scaling. “When the conservation practices are installed on the current acreage in the Conservation Reserve Program, we estimate total erosion on cropland will be reduced by about a fifth. That also means a lot less sedimentation.”

Texas currently shows the most erosion reduction, with 131 million tons on nearly 3.7 million acres. Colorado is second, with 45 million tons on 1.8 million acres, followed by Kansas with 41 million tons on 2.5 million acres.

Nationwide, the average soil loss on land in the program is estimated to be reduced from 21.5 tons per acre to 1.6 tons after permanent vegetation is established.

The goal of the Conservation Reserve Program is to retire 40-45 million acres of highly erodible cropland from production. Farmers submit bids at the USDA Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service office to put their land into the program. They receive an annual rental payment for putting the land into protective cover, such as grass or trees, for 10 years.

The next signup—the ninth for the program—is July 17 through Aug. 4. The eighth CRP signup resulted in nearly 2.5 million more acres in the program and erosion reduction of more than 35 million tons per year when vegetation is established. The average rental rate is \$49 an acre. The program is scheduled to end Dec. 31, 1990.

Total contracts, acreage, and erosion reduction figures by state through the eighth signup are:

Conservation Reserve Program

	Number of Contracts	Acres Contracted	Erosion Reduction (tons/year)
Alabama	8,569	499,037	8,988,832
Alaska	39	24,701	118,131
Arkansas	2,644	196,416	3,009,877
California	464	177,417	2,430,969
Colorado	5,602	1,824,194	45,584,745
Connecticut	1	10	120
Delaware	23	866	7,367
Florida	2,037	113,834	1,773,332
Georgia	12,875	618,276	7,820,509
Hawaii	1	85	340
Idaho	3,177	747,743	11,942,663
Illinois	12,748	546,670	11,207,546
Indiana	7,812	312,812	5,245,698
Iowa	27,173	1,789,024	33,592,054
Kansas	26,357	2,547,758	41,982,973
Kentucky	7,006	397,474	13,870,968
Louisiana	1,336	104,705	1,447,583
Maine	860	35,624	252,909
Maryland	400	11,331	133,540
Massachusetts	5	32	222
Michigan	4,240	169,872	2,088,689
Minnesota	23,646	1,728,393	29,402,301
Mississippi	10,539	644,256	14,562,097
Missouri	18,466	1,441,712	27,462,405
Montana	6,791	2,453,749	31,804,192
Nebraska	11,962	1,226,271	28,153,866
Nevada	7	2,397	33,647
New Jersey	21	496	9,392
New Mexico	1,494	476,059	19,762,359
New York	1,371	50,470	658,976
North Carolina	5,290	124,888	2,122,796
North Dakota	15,279	2,595,616	38,846,086

Ohio	4,773	204,791	2,648,729
Oklahoma	7,646	1,065,930	24,565,750
Oregon	1,874	507,222	5,657,790
Pennsylvania	2,112	80,244	1,375,520
Puerto Rico	7	440	14,816
South Carolina	5,841	247,218	3,253,734
South Dakota	9,586	1,587,523	18,222,955
Tennessee	9,274	406,568	9,445,872
Texas	16,864	3,686,765	131,750,826
Utah	962	229,521	3,774,000
Vermont	9	187	2,371
Virginia	2,610	65,750	1,193,137
Washington	3,736	899,248	12,278,394
West Virginia	31	590	5,345
Wisconsin	14,304	516,341	7,780,066
Wyoming	716	232,146	3,085,151
TOTAL	298,580	30,592,672	609,371,639

Note: Arizona, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island have no CRP contracts. Data covers all eight signup periods to date, through February 1989.

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1988-CROP WHEAT, BARLEY PRODUCERS TO RECEIVE 12-MONTH 0/92 PAYMENTS

WASHINGTON, June 22—The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Commodity Credit Corporation will make about \$2 million in 0/92 program payments to eligible 1988-crop wheat and barley producers, according to Acting CCC Executive Vice President Vern Nepl. These payments will be made in commodity certificates by USDA’s Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service’s county offices after July 14.

Eligible wheat and barley producers in the 0/92 program are assured the emergency compensation or 12-month “Findley” minimum payment rates shown in the following table:

	Wheat	Barley	Oats
	- - - dollars per bushel - - -		
A. Total minimum payment rates	1.53	0.76	0.30
B. 5-month minimum payment rate	1.47	0.71	0.30
C. 12-month minimum payment			
Rate (line A minus live B)	0.06	0.05	0.00

CCC estimates payments to producers will be approximately \$1 million each for wheat and barley. No payments are due oat producers.

Eligible wheat and barley producers received the five-month minimum 0/92 program payments with the deficiency payments made after the first five months of the applicable crop year. Wheat producers in the 0/92 program who elected to receive an advance of the “Findley” payment received that portion in December 1988.

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USDA SAYS GRAIN INDUSTRY FACES RAILCAR SHORTAGE

WASHINGTON, June 23—Unless the rail industry takes corrective steps, there will be a serious shortage of covered-hopper railcars for shipping grain by the end of this century—probably as early as 1991—a U.S. Department of Agriculture official said today.

Martin “Buzz” Fitzpatrick, Jr., administrator of USDA’s Office of Transportation, said that the shortage of railcars faced by grain shippers in the spring of 1988 could be repeated as early as 1991.

“In early 1988,” Fitzpatrick said, “there was a 2- to 6-week delay for shippers in getting grain cars. For some shippers, the delay was as high as 14 weeks.”

Fitzpatrick said an OT study showed that the cause was a “shrinking and aging” grain car fleet combined with increased demand, particularly for grain for export.

“We have now done a follow-up study,” he said, “that identifies the car capacity needed to meet future grain transportation needs under various scenarios.”

The jumbo covered-hopper car is the work horse of rail grain transportation, according to Fitzpatrick. “With gravity discharge and a capacity of 3,300 to 3,400 bushels, this kind of car has an optimum set of loading, unloading, protective and shipment-size characteristics for moving grain. In 1987, these cars transported 95 percent of all grain moved by rail.”

However, since 1982 virtually no new cars have been added to the Nation’s railcar fleet. At the same time, more and more cars are being lost annually for a variety of reasons—accidents, derailments, and retirement because of age.

“The bottom line,” he said, “is that today’s fleet of 98,600 cars used for grain shipments will drop to 66,300 by the year 2001. Our study shows the peak fleet requirement for that year to be 96,000 cars—resulting in a projected deficit of nearly 30,000 cars.”

Currently, railroads own about 60 percent of the jumbo covered-hopper grain cars and grain shippers own the rest. “If this ratio is to be maintained,” Fitzpatrick said, “the primary burden of adding new rail cars for grain shipments lies with the railroads, because 82 percent of the cars over 20 years old are owned by the railroads.”

The 6-month-long OT study looked at projections of grain production and exports, trends in moving grain by rail, seasonal trends in movement and allocation of exports between port regions. The study also looked at grain car utilization or car cycle time. “That’s the time needed to load a car, get it to its destination, unload it and return it to its point of origin,” Fitzpatrick said.

“Because of increased use of unit trains, overall better fleet management and other factors,” he continued, “we project an improvement in car cycle time—about 1.5 percent per year. But this will not compensate for the number of cars being lost from the fleet.”

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USDA STUDY: YEARLY PLANTING BOOSTS PROFIT FOR NORTHERN PLAINS WHEAT

WASHINGTON, June 26—Wheat farmers on the Northern Great Plains could make up to 68 percent more money each year by planting a crop yearly instead of every other year, a U.S. Department of Agriculture study has found.

Farmers traditionally have left idle, or fallowed, their fields for a year in the Northern Plains, then seeded to wheat. This fallow-crop sequence gave extra time for the soil to soak up moisture, increasing chances of a good crop.

“Our six-year study in the Northern Plains shows fallowing usually isn’t necessary. Wheat farmers can earn up to \$9.60 more per acre at today’s prices by growing crops annually,” said Kris Aase, a soil scientist for USDA’s Agricultural Research Service. He is based at the Northern Plains Soil and Water Research Center in Sidney, Mont.

Aase said farmers should remain flexible if they decide to plant each year. They can make use of the years when there is adequate moisture rather than letting weeds take up the moisture in idle fields.

If the probabilities of a drought year are high, he said, farmers should consider summer fallow, using conservation tillage practices that protect soil from erosion.

“Early settlers recognized how dry the Plains can be, some learning after two or three disastrous crop losses in a row,” Aase said. “In an effort to conserve water and better ensure a successful crop, they adopted the technique of fallowing.”

But, he said, the new study and research over the past 20 years shows that modern farming practices help the soil retain moisture and protect against erosion. Such practices include grass barriers and reduced tillage.

He said his most profitable yearly cropping sequence consisted of first wheat, then safflower and finally barley.

Next in profitability was wheat grown in a three-year rotation of fallow-wheat-wheat and least profitable was the traditional fallow-wheat rotation, Aase said. Compared to the income of \$23.60 per acre for an annual crop, these rotations netted \$21 and \$14 per acre per year respectively, he added.

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#

PLANTS THAT “EAT” SELENIUM MAY CLEAN-UP TOXIC SOIL, SCIENTISTS SAY

WASHINGTON, June 27—Plants that “eat” selenium might be used to prevent too much of this potentially toxic mineral from ending up in food and water, U.S. Department of Agriculture scientists report.

After testing 200 plant species already known to have a liking for selenium, plant nutritionist Gary S. Banuelos has pinpointed the best of the lot in greenhouse tests—wild mustard from Pakistan. It is a yellow-flowered plant similar to mustard that grows wild throughout the West.

If the Pakistani mustard does as well in field tests, five mustard crops a year could remove up to 50 percent of the soluble selenium in the top 12 inches of soil, said Banuelos of USDA’s Agricultural Research Service, Fresno, Calif. A planting of five crops could be possible in states such as California.

He found the plant in an ongoing search for species that could thrive on soils that have high levels of selenium and are irrigated with recycled water. Salt, which can stunt plant growth, and selenium can build up in irrigated fields.

Selenium has been aptly named a “Jekyll and Hyde” mineral in humans, said Wayne C. Hawkes, research chemist at the ARS Western Human Nutrition Research Center, San Francisco. Too little of it can lead to weakening of the heart, but too much of it—signalled by a garlic-like breath odor—can lead to liver and kidney damage.

Genetic engineering may play a future role in keeping selenium at safe levels in soils. Plants that take up selenium might be genetically engineered to remove more of the mineral or other elements from contaminated pastures, fields or drainage water, said David W. Ow. He is a molecular geneticist with the ARS Plant Gene Expression Center in Albany, Calif.

Ow is investigating how molecules called phytochelatins work in plants growing in soils contaminated with toxic metals. “Phytochelatins bind to such metals as cadmium, copper, zinc and lead,” he said. “We suspect that they will attach to selenium as well.”

If that’s the case, he said, it might be possible to engineer plant species to increase their intake of selenium.

His and Banuelos’ research were reported in the latest issue of the agency’s Agricultural Research magazine.

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USDA RELEASES COST OF FOOD AT HOME FOR MAY

WASHINGTON, June 27—Here is the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s monthly update of the weekly cost of food at home for May 1989:

Cost of food at home for a week in March 1988

	-----Food plans-----			
	(In Dollars)			
	Thrifty	Low-cost	Moderate cost	Liberal
<hr/>				
Families:				
Family of 2				
(20-50 years)	44.90	56.60	69.90	87.40
Family of 2				
(51 years and over)	42.30	54.30	67.20	80.50
Family of 4 with				
preschool children	65.20	81.30	99.30	122.30
Family of 4 with elemen-				
tary schoolchildren	74.70	95.50	119.50	144.10
<hr/>				
Individuals in				
four-person families:				
Children:				
1-2 years	11.70	14.30	16.60	20.10
3-5 years	12.70	15.50	19.20	23.10
6-8 years	15.50	20.60	25.80	30.10
9-11 years	18.40	23.40	30.20	34.90
Females:				
12-19 years	19.10	23.00	27.90	33.80
20-50 years	19.40	24.10	29.30	37.60
51 and over	19.10	23.40	29.00	34.70
Males:				
12-14 years	19.30	26.60	33.20	38.90
15-19 years	20.00	27.50	34.10	39.60
20-50 years	21.40	27.40	34.20	41.50
51 and over	19.40	26.00	32.10	38.50
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USDA's Human Nutrition Information Service computes the cost of food at home for four food plans—thrifty, low-cost, moderate-cost, and liberal.

Dr. James T. Heimbach, acting administrator of the Human Nutrition Information Service, said the plans consist of foods that provide well-balanced meals and snacks for a week.

In computing the costs, USDA assumes all food is bought at the store and prepared at home. Costs do not include alcoholic beverages, pet food, soap, cigarettes, paper goods, and other nonfood items bought at the store.

“USDA costs are only guides to spending,” Heimbach said. “Families may spend more or less, depending on such factors as where they buy their food, how carefully they plan and buy, whether some food is produced at home, what foods the family likes, and how much food is prepared at home.

“Most families will find the moderate-cost or low-cost plan suitable,” he said. “The thrifty plan, which USDA uses to set the coupon allotment in the food stamp program, is for families who have tighter budgets. Families with unlimited resources might use the liberal plan.”

To use the chart to estimate your family's food costs:

—For members eating all meals at home—or carried from home—use the amounts shown in the chart.

—For members eating some meals out, deduct 5 percent from the amount shown for each meal not eaten at home. Thus, for a person eating lunch out 5 days a week, subtract 25 percent, or one-fourth the cost shown.

—For guests, add 5 percent of the amount shown for the proper age group for each meal.

Costs in the second part of the chart are for individuals in four-person families. If your family has more or less than four, total the “individual” figures and make these adjustments, because larger families tend to buy and use food more economically than smaller ones:

—For a one-person family, add 20 percent.

—For a two-person family, add 10 percent.

—For a three-person family, add 5 percent.

—For a five or six-person family, subtract 5 percent.

—For a family of seven or more, subtract 10 percent.

Details of the four family food plans are available from the Nutrition Education Division, HNIS, USDA, Federal Building, Hyattsville, Md. 20782.

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#

FOREST SERVICE SEEKS PUBLIC INPUT ON NATURAL RESOURCE PLAN

WASHINGTON, June 27—The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service is asking the public to review and comment on a draft plan that will provide program direction for the agency's natural resource activities for the next five years.

FS is required to develop a plan every five years under the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974 (RPA). The current RPA program plan will be the fourth created since passage of the act.

The plan will be delivered to Congress by the secretary of agriculture early in 1990 as the basis for deliberations on funding and policy directions for the agency. The plan will be based on an assessment of the status of the nation's total natural resources and the opportunities for improved resource management.

The RPA draft describes five different strategies for long-term management. Each includes management direction for the National Forest System, state and private forestry program support, and research activities.

"All five options are reasonable plans based on the current assessment of the nation's forest and range land resources," said FS Chief F. Dale Robertson. "Identifying a preferred strategy is where public involvement is required. We want citizens to review the strategies, and give us their ideas and reactions."

The draft plan covers FS roles in many aspects of natural resource operations, including topics such as multiple-use management, contribution to local economies, management in mixed ownerships, inventory and analysis, environmental communication, and international forestry.

Also described in the draft are several contemporary issues, such as riparian management and changing recreation needs, which face the

Forest Service and how the agency is seeking to respond to each.

Robertson encouraged those concerned with the future of natural resource management to read and comment on the draft program. “We have made every attempt to make this document less intimidating for the reviewer. Our emphasis is on the philosophical underpinnings of FS management. We want people to discuss ideas with us, not be buried in seemingly endless statistics.”

All public comments must be postmarked by Oct. 3.

To obtain more information and a copy of the draft, contact Jim McDivitt, RPA Staff, FS/USDA, Room 3306-S, P.O. Box 96090, Washington, D.C. 20090-6090; telephone (202) 383-8235.

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#

NEW HYBRID ORANGE CAN REDUCE DEPENDENCY ON BRAZILIAN JUICE

WASHINGTON, June 28—A U.S. Department of Agriculture scientist has developed a new hybrid orange that is expected to help Florida growers and processors reduce U.S. dependence on imported juice.

Juice from Ambersweet, the new hybrid, does not need to be mixed with other orange juices to meet Federal color standards for Grade A juice, said C. Jack Hearn.

Hearn, plant geneticist with the Agricultural Research Service, said that the demand for orange juice exceeds domestic supplies. Some \$535 million worth of orange juice was imported in 1987-88, mostly from Brazil, to bridge that gap.

This, said Hearn, is partly because juice from a popular early season variety, Hamlin, has a pale color. It must be mixed with juice having a deeper color—such as Valencia—to meet the color standard.

“Ambersweet oranges will help processors who must now import and store juice to mix with Hamlin,” Hearn commented. “Because it exceeds the minimum color standards, it can also be mixed with other orange juices—including Hamlin—that don’t meet the color requirements.”

Florida Valencias, which account for about 40 percent of the state’s orange crop, don’t ripen until April through May—two to five months after Hamlins (December to early February). Ambersweet, on the other hand, ripens by mid-October and can be harvested through December.

Ambersweet trees should be available from commercial nurseries within a year. It takes about four years to produce a crop from nursery stock, said Hearn at the U.S. Horticultural Research Laboratory in Orlando, Fla.

“We developed the Ambersweet variety from a cross of sweet orange, mandarin and grapefruit in 1963,” he said. “They were 26 years in the making, but growers and processors throughout Florida are as excited about these trees as we are.”

Moderately cold hardy, the new hybrid can withstand freezes that have wiped out less hardy groves in the past. “The unique thing about the Ambersweet orange is that it’s ideal for both fresh and processing markets,” said Hearn.

Plus, it ripens earlier than most varieties, including Sunstar, Midsweet and Gardner oranges—the three, new midseason varieties (mid-January through March) that Hearn released in 1987.

Test-grown in two areas of Florida since 1974, the productive Ambersweet hybrid bears large fruit with a medium-thick rind that makes it easy to peel as a fresh fruit. The thin rind on most Florida oranges makes peeling difficult.

The new hybrid’s postharvest characteristics are excellent—they hold up well after harvest and retain freshness with little decay.

The Valencia, which is an excellent juice orange, is not very coldhardy. Another drawback, Hearn said, is that “it takes 14 months for Valencia oranges to mature.” This means they hang on the tree throughout the winter season, vulnerable to the weather.

Paul Messenger of USDA’s National Agricultural Statistics Service estimates that 93 percent of Florida’s 1987-88 orange crop, valued at \$929 million, was used for juice.

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#

EMPLOYERS OF ALIENS IN SEASONAL AGRICULTURAL SERVICES FACE JULY 17 DEADLINE

WASHINGTON, June 28—The July 17 deadline is nearing for federal filing of work-day reports by employers of “reportable” aliens doing seasonal field work in fruits, vegetables or other perishable commodities at any time from April through June, said Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Jack C. Parnell.

In calling attention to the deadline set under the Immigration and Nationality Act, Parnell emphasized that it is illegal to employ unauthorized aliens. The forms must be submitted to the Committee for Employment Information on Special Agricultural Workers at 1201 E. 10th St., Jeffersonville, IN 47132.

Federal officials need data from the forms to determine how many “replenishment agricultural workers” if any, are to be admitted to the United States during each of fiscal years 1990-1993. The Immigration and Naturalization Service then will admit that number of aliens. INS soon will issue regulations on how aliens may apply for replenishment worker status.

Reports are due, Parnell said, from employers of field working-alien doing “seasonal agricultural services” with fruits and vegetables of every kind or “other perishable commodities” as defined in regulations issued by the secretary of agriculture.

The term, “other perishable commodities,” is limited to Christmas trees, cut flowers, herbs, hops, horticultural specialties such as greenhouse nursery crops, lettuce seed, spanish reeds (*arundo donax*), spices, sugar beets and tobacco.

Employers whose alien employees do field work in sod or sugarcane also are required to submit the reports, Parnell said. Fruits and vegetables under the law include berries, melons, tree fruits and nuts, table vegetables, corn and small grains, cotton and soybeans.

Employers whose alien employees do not do field work in fruits or vegetables or in the other listed commodities are not required to submit the reports, he said. Employers excluded from the reporting requirements include those whose employees are handling exclusively animal agricultural products, birds, dairy products, earthworms, fish, including oysters and shellfish, flax, forest products, furbearing animals and rabbits, hay, honey, horses and other equines, other livestock of all kinds

including animal specialties, forage, silage, poultry and poultry products, wildlife and/or wool.

There are about 813,400 employers of roughly 2.81 million farm workers in the United States. How many are covered by the law is unknown, Parnell said.

Covered employers who fail to submit the work-day reports by July 17, violate the law and could be cited and fined by the Labor Department, whose Wage and Hour Division is responsible for enforcement of the reporting requirements. Employers who did not file reports for the last quarter of 1988 or the first quarter of 1989, as required, should do so now to avoid being fined for failing to report, Parnell said.

Part of the required form has space for alien names and their registration numbers, which, to be reportable, must be in the A90000000 series. Aliens with registration numbers less than 90,000,000 are not reportable.

Under the law, he said, any employer who knowingly and willfully falsifies, conceals or covers up any required information shall be subject to a fine of not more than \$10,000 or imprisonment for not more than 5-years or both.

Report forms (ESA-92) are available from local agricultural Extension agents or at state and local offices of USDA's Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, USDL's Wage and Hour Division or the INS.

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#

USDA ANNOUNCES CHANGES IN DAIRY PRICE SUPPORT PROGRAM

WASHINGTON, June 28—Secretary of Agriculture Clayton Yeutter said today that the level of price support for milk will revert to \$10.60 per hundredweight on July 1.

The Disaster Assistance Act of 1988 required the secretary to temporarily increase the support price by 50 cents per cwt. from April 1 through June 30. The \$10.60 per cwt. support level was in effect prior to the temporary increase.

The price support of \$10.60 per cwt. is for milk with a milkfat content of 3.67 percent—the national average—and compares with \$10.35 per cwt. for milk with a milkfat content of 3.5 percent.

The price support program for milk is carried out through Commodity Credit Corporation purchases of butter, cheese and nonfat dry milk. The CCC purchase prices for butter and cheese will be decreased on July 1 to reflect the lower support price.

Because of current market conditions, all of the price support decrease of purchases of butter and nonfat dry milk has been applied to the CCC purchase price for butter. The CCC purchase price for butter will be reduced by 11.5 cents per pound to \$1.2050 per pound. The nonfat dry milk price will be unchanged at \$0.79 per pound. The CCC purchase prices for block Cheddar and barrel cheese will be reduced by 4.75 cents per pound to \$1.1550 per pound and \$1.1150 per pound, respectively.

These purchase prices are in accordance with recent legislation (PL 101-7) which requires that, in implementing the 50 cents per cwt. decrease, not more than 25 percent of the price support decrease shall be in the purchase price for nonfat dry milk and that at least 75 percent of the decrease shall be in the purchase price for butter.

The legislation provides further that the secretary may allocate the decrease differently if he determines it will result in the lowest level of expenditures by CCC.

Further terms and conditions for CCC purchases of dairy products will be contained in CCC announcements.

CCC-owned dairy products will continue to be available for purchase for unrestricted use at prices which are about 10 percent over the prevailing CCC price support purchase prices. Currently, only butter is being offered for sale.

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#

USDA EXPANDS EMERGENCY HAYING ON CRP ACRES

WASHINGTON, June 28—The U.S. Department of Agriculture announced today that permission for emergency haying of Conservation Reserve Program acres would be expanded.

Effective immediately, subject to previous limitations announced June 2, qualifying farmers and ranchers in counties where a livestock emergency has been determined to exist may hay Permanent Wildlife Habitat acres under CRP.

Haying may not be closer than 20 feet to shrubs or trees established as part of the habitat practice and is subject to the earlier provision that at least 25 percent of the field must be left undisturbed for wildlife cover.

Haying of alfalfa used for temporary cover is also authorized, providing the ground is prepared immediately for seeding for establishment of permanent cover at the next normal opportunity for seeding.

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#

NEW TREATMENT STUDIED TO COMBAT SPREADING BEE MITE

WASHINGTON, June 29—A mite that lives in the breathing tubes of the European honey bee is more serious and widespread than previously thought, but U.S. Department of Agriculture scientists are encouraged by early tests of a new compound to combat it.

The tracheal mite, *Acarapis woodi*, infests the large trachea, or breathing tube, of adult bees. It punctures the tracheal wall and sucks the bee's blood. This eventually leads to the bee's death. The European honey bee is the most important bee for crop pollination and honey production in the U.S.

“This past winter and spring, the magnitude of damage caused by the mite has been especially noticeable,” said entomologist William T. Wilson of USDA's Agricultural Research Service. “There's been a loss of honey, a loss of crop pollination, a loss of money—all with long-term effects for crop producers.”

But Wilson, ARS's leading authority on the mite, said a compound called amitraz was at least 90 percent effective against the mites in early tests by him and colleagues at the ARS Honey Bee Research Laboratory in Weslaco, Texas.

At present, menthol is the only approved treatment for tracheal mites. Screen packets filled with menthol crystals and inserted into hives can kill the mite during warm weather.

"Beekeepers who treated with menthol prior to the past two winters are in good condition compared to those who did not," Wilson said. "It will not eradicate the mite but it will help keep the colony losses down."

His studies showed that amitraz, while as effective as menthol in normal temperatures, outperformed it at cool temperatures. And unlike menthol, it was equally effective against the Varroa mite, another major bee parasite.

Two amitraz tests were done with 125 honey bee colonies in Nebraska. "In both tests, amitraz gave very good control of the tracheal mite," Wilson said. "I'd say we got 90 percent control or better in most cases."

The chemical was tested as an aerosol and as plastic strips inserted into hives. One test ran from April to October 1988, the other from October to April 1989.

Amitraz was developed in Europe and is currently approved for use in the United States against ticks and lice of cattle and hogs, and against pear rust mite and European red mite, both pests of pears. It needs approval of the Environmental Protection Agency before it can be commercially marketed for tracheal mite control, Wilson said. Neither it nor menthol hurts bees at correct treatment levels.

Wilson said tests with amitraz and other controls will continue for the next two or three years. For a long-term solution, researchers are aiming at breeding mite-resistant stocks of honey bees, he added.

Bees infested with the tracheal mite often become disoriented, stressed and eventually die, he said. Older foraging bees that are seriously infested may never return to their colonies.

A University of Georgia study done in Mexico, where the mite is well established, showed that mite-infested colonies produced only one-eighth as much honey as healthy colonies.

The mite has been spreading in the U.S. since 1984. Several states that had low mite populations three years ago, specifically California, Washington and New York, are now heavily infested, Wilson said.

In Washington state, the mite's damage to the bee industry has skyrocketed in the last three years.

In 1986, it caused colony losses of 3 to 10 percent among the state's beekeepers, according to James Bach, chief bee inspector with the Washington Department of Agriculture. "Today, we're seeing colony losses of 10 percent to as high as 86 percent," he said. "We feel our average loss in Washington commercial bee stock is at about 40 percent."

He said one beekeeper who lost 600 colonies to the mite is expected to lose \$75,000 this year.

"I've talked with state inspectors around the country and they're experiencing similar losses," said Bach, who also is president of Apiary Inspectors of America. "The West and the Northeast have probably been hit the hardest. Some states report overall losses of as much as 50 percent."

European honey bees are the primary insect pollinators of many U.S. crops, including melons, cucumbers, blueberries, apples, onions and alfalfa, he said. Pollination services in Washington cost customers \$30 per colony.

"Beekeepers who recognize they have a mite problem have been using menthol to halt the spread," Bach said. "Most are looking ahead to amitraz. It's cheaper to use, and anything that's cheaper than what we've got will be used."

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